



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Ely District Office
HC33 Box 33500 (702 N. Industrial Way)
Ely, Nevada 89301-9408
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html



In Reply Refer to:
(9210) NVL0044

FEB 16 2012

Dear Interested Public,

The Bureau of Land Management, Ely District Office, Egan Field Office (BLM) in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Ruby Mountain Ranger District (FS) and the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW); are proposing to improve habitat for sage-grouse, mule deer, elk and pronghorn antelope and restore natural vegetative conditions by conducting manual, mechanical and prescribed fire treatments in the Overland Pass area. The project area is located along the southern flanks of the Ruby Mountains, in White Pine and Elko Counties, Nevada. The Overland Pass/Big Wash Habitat Improvement Project consists of approximately 40,000 acres, of which approximately 17,000 acres would undergo vegetation treatments (see enclosed map).

The purpose of the project is to improve habitat for wildlife, reduce risk of large wildfires, and restore or improve vegetation diversity within the treatment areas. The project is located in greater sage-grouse nesting, summer, and winter habitat; crucial summer, winter and transitional mule deer habitats; pronghorn antelope habitat; and yearlong elk habitat.

Possible treatments include the use of an Ely chain (a battleship anchor chain with 18 inch rail iron welded on every other link--designed to scarify the ground to aid in reseeding success), mastication, prescribed fire, hand thinning, and a combination of mastication and hand thinning (Table 1).

Table 1. Possible Treatments within the Overland Pass/Big Wash Project Area

Possible treatments	Potential acres
Ely chain/Mastication	10,660
Mastication	3,670
Prescribed fire	810
Hand Thinning/mastication	700
Mastication and hydroaxing	640

Treatment methods listed in Table 1 and depicted on the enclosed map are currently proposed to meet the purpose the project. However, site specific conditions may indicate the need to adjust the treatment methods within the mapped treatment units. For instance slope in a unit identified for chaining may make chaining impracticable. In this case mastication or hand thinning may be used to meet the purpose and need. The environmental assessment (EA) will identify these potential adaptations and describe the differences between the potential effects of the treatment methods if there are any.

While treatment methods may change for a particular unit, they will occur within the treatment areas shown on the map. Therefore, acreages of the treatment types may change from those currently shown in Table 1.

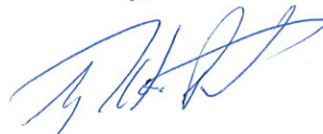
In addition to vegetation treatments, the project proposes to perform improvements on Cracker Johnson Spring #2. This would include installation of fencing around the spring, treating noxious weeds, installation of soil stabilization structures, and improvements to the existing infrastructure to ensure adequate water supply continues to be available.

Preparation of an EA is currently beginning for the project. The EA outlining the Proposed Action, any Alternative Actions, Existing Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Cumulative Impacts will be available for public review and comment in the coming months. This project is consistent with the management objectives of the 2008 Ely BLM Resource Management Plan and Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended).

We are asking for your comments on the Overland Pass/Big Wash Habitat Improvement Project to help identify any concerns or issues, and to provide alternatives that meet the project goals so that they may be considered in the development of the EA. Written comments on the proposed project are encouraged and should be sent to Cody Coombs, Fuels Program Manager at the BLM Ely District Office, HC33 Box 33500, Ely, Nevada 89301-9408, or emailed to ccoombs@blm.gov. Comments should be delivered by March 15, 2012. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have any questions or would like to remain on the mailing list for this project, please contact Cody Coombs at the address listed above or at (775) 289-1854. Please note that future project information and EA documents will only be sent to those who comment or request to remain on the mailing list for this project. However, all EA documents will be published to the BLM Ely District website as shown above in the letterhead and on the Forest Service PALS database.

Sincerely,

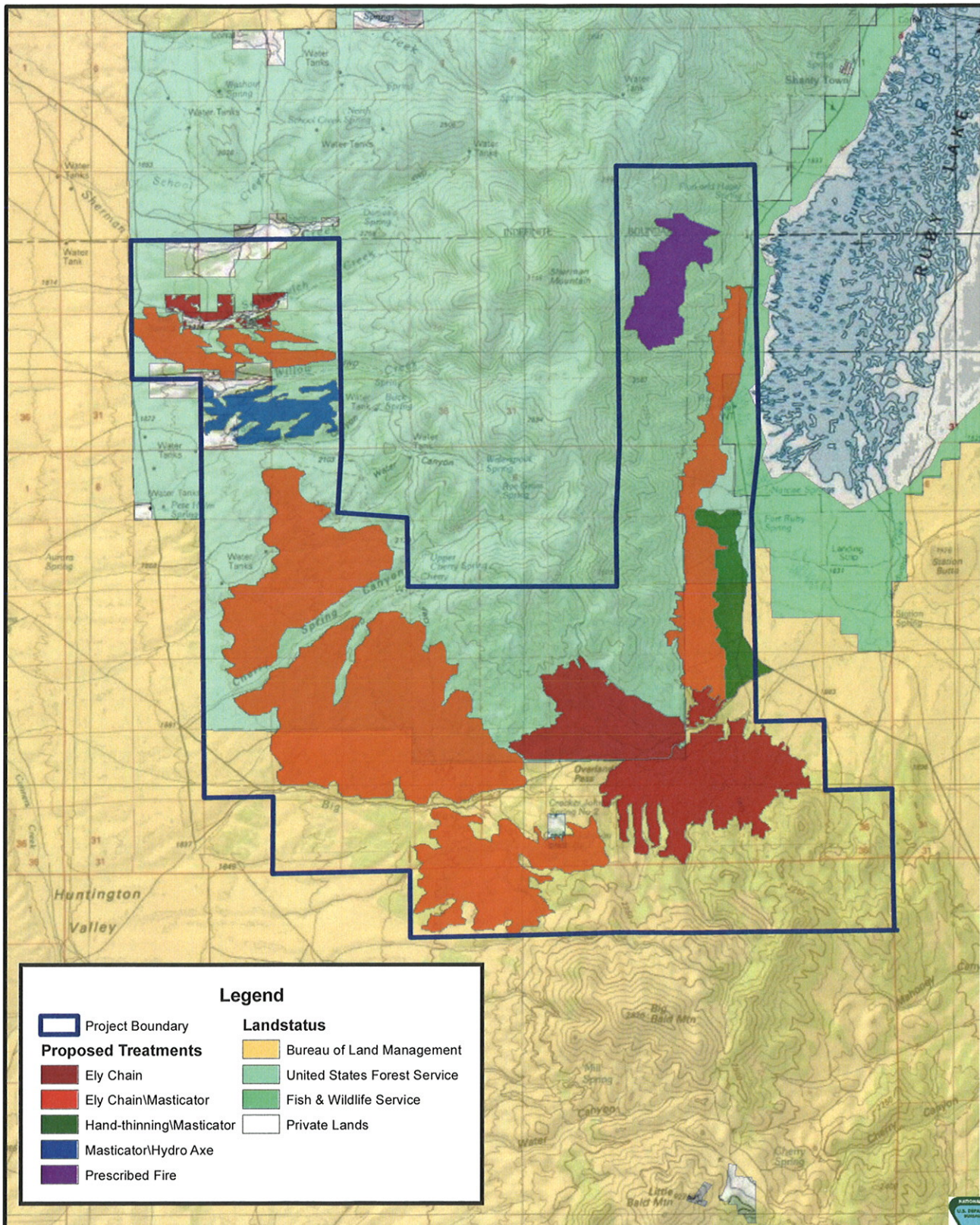


Tye Petersen
Fire Management Officer
Ely District Office (BLM)



Nancy Taylor
Acting District Ranger
Ruby Mountain Ranger District (FS)

Enclosure



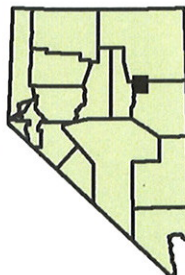
PROJECT LOCATION MAP

OVERLAND PASS/BIG WASH
HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

SCALE: 1" = 2 MILES

DATE DRAWN: JANUARY 19, 2012

0 1 2 4 MILES



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